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ABSTRACT

As rural communities become more culturally diverse, the institutions and organizations that serve them must assist this cultural transition by providing a framework for change. Such a framework includes a vision of healthy diverse communities that are conscious of changing demographics and willing to reevaluate community self-image. Three projects in Wayne County, New York, have heightened this consciousness and encouraged participation of all groups. In these projects, migrant teenagers collected and recorded oral histories of their families and other farmworkers, resulting in a book that illuminates the rightful place of these families in the community; a multicultural arts series encourages inquiry and contact between diverse cultures and provides drama and dance training for African American and Latino youth; and a racial equality action group empowers citizens to confront discriminatory practices and has sponsored a job bank, a scholarship fund and mentoring project for students of color, a multicultural education packet for area schools, and local speakers for community education programs. The following key assumptions underlie these programs: (1) cultural differences are important and valuable; (2) the target of change is the whole community; (3) community restructuring and social action are necessary; and (4) programs must be participant driven. Essential skills for change agents and community leaders are intercultural relations skills, conflict resolution skills, and an understanding of power. Multicultural training can encourage exploration of personal and professional boundaries that inhibit effective intercultural communication. Contains 17 annotated cultural diversity references and 6 multicultural resources. (SV)

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Innovations in
Community & Rural Development

Cultural Diversity In Rural Communities

Kathy Castania Fox

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Innovations in Community & Rural Development

Cultural Diversity In Rural Communities

Kathy Castania Fox

Through my work with migrant farmworkers in upstate New York I am learning the dynamics of intercultural communication and the impact of cultural diversity on the rural communities where they travel. We have witnessed when cultures come in contact with each other there is potential for great learning or destructive conflict. Often migrant farmworkers, who are predominately people of color, live with the outcomes of the institutional and individual racism in the host community. Therefore, intercultural programs need to honestly deal with the realities of this cultural interaction and its potentially devastating effects on both communities.

As rural communities continue to become more culturally diverse, the institutions and organizations who serve them need to be prepared to assist this cultural transition. They need to provide a framework for change that includes a vision for creating healthy diverse communities. This case study offers examples of successful programs and outlines an approach to multicultural training. A set of working assumptions developed in collaboration with colleagues and farmworkers is provided as well.

Intercultural Programing

In rural communities diverse cultures can be invisible; not reflected in the community's projection of its self image. For example, communities will have volumes of local histories that exclude the voices of African American, Latino, Native American and Asian residents, arts programs may reflect only the arts of the dominant culture, and the outcomes of traditional hiring practices perpetuate all-white public and private institutions. In healthy diverse communities there should be a consciousness of the changing demographics and the willingness to continually re-evaluate community self-image. Three projects in Wayne County, New York that have heightened this consciousness and encouraged the participation of all groups are highlighted below.

Oral Histories: an inclusive history as a vehicle for change

Migrant teenagers collected and recorded the oral histories of their families and other farmworkers. These stories were ultimately transcribed by a local historian and published by the county's historical society. This book entitled, *Oral Histories from the Back Roads: Migrant Farmworkers of Wayne County, New York*, is a statement of the rightful place of the thousands of African American and Haitian farmworkers who have been traveling and settling in this community for almost fifty years. Young people and adults who worked on and were featured in this book now share a sense of pride in their present contribution and a renewed interest in learning about the contributions of their predecessors.

Multicultural Arts: a chance for inquiry and contact

The Wayne County Minority Arts Project was begun in 1984 as a vehicle for encouraging inquiry and contact between diverse cultures. The annual series hosts eight events which feature performances in dance, gospel music, various forms of Caribbean and Mexican music, storytelling, poetry, literature, verbal/movement arts, drama and a Kwanzaa celebration. Another component provides training in drama and dance for African American and Latino youth.

A Racial Equality Action Group: dealing with individual and institutional racism.

In response to discriminatory practices in schools, police force and public agencies, concerned citizens formed Wayne Action For Racial Equality (WARE). Recognizing that fear

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prevented individuals from confronting discriminatory practices, the organization helped citizens gain power to shape the way the community operated. WARE has set up a job bank to assist agencies and businesses in developing more inclusive hiring practices, established a scholarship fund for African American students, organized a mentoring project to encourage students of color to pursue higher education, developed of a multicultural education resource packet for area schools, sponsored local speakers for community education programs, and provided representation on local and county boards and committees.

Working Assumptions

Key assumptions that underlie these three programs are:

Cultural differences are important and valuable. We live in a culturally diverse world and this diversity is indeed the key to our humanness. All of us come from cultures which have long rich histories of struggle and resistance. Everyone needs to be in touch with their own cultural history in order to better understand the people with whom they work.

The target of change is the whole community. All sectors of the community are intricately linked. Opportunities must be created for communication and interaction between groups in ways which serve to enrich both. Human service workers can play a vital role by finding ways to be the translators and instigators of opportunities for empowering community interaction and re-education.

Restructuring and social action are necessary. In order to create viable programs for cultural diversity it is important to have more than "celebratory" events. Community "restructuring" needs to be encouraged through comprehensive programming which promotes thoughtful, serious discussion and action.

All programs should be participant driven. Programs should be open, responsive, inclusive of differences, and participatory. Power and control in the hands of the participants and stakeholders should increase the opportunity for genuine involvement at every level of the process of program development.

Multicultural Training

Change agents and community leaders need the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop multicultural communities. Three essential skills are:

o Intercultural relations skills which include oppression theory.

o Conflict resolution skills which use emotional healing processes.

o An understanding of power and how it is used to empower or oppress.

Improving intercultural communication in an organization and/or a community means changing beliefs held by members of the dominant culture about members of other cultures. The complexity of this issue, coupled with the sensitivity that has developed among white people who fear being attacked, make the process of learning and teaching a delicate one.

Multiculturalism: A Personal and Professional Journey is an intensive three day interactive training which encourages exploration of personal and professional boundaries which inhibit effective intercultural communication. The underlying assumptions in designing multicultural trainings are:

- All people are born good, and also powerful, loving, caring, responsible and creative, intelligent and zestful.
- Racism and other forms of oppression are learned.
- We cannot be blamed for learning the racism we were taught, yet we have a responsibility to try to identify and interrupt the cycle of oppression.
- Racism has negative ramifications for everyone; it hurts members of the privileged group as well as those targeted by racism.
- Guilt and fear can hold prejudice in place. To move toward constructive action some personal emotional healing from past experience with oppression is important.

Collaborators

Over the years there have been many dedicated members of boards and committees who have made these programs happen. They include: Vera Alford, Gloria Battle, Rose Marie Chierici, Pandora Cole, Denise DeValk, Maria Diaz, Ann Hallinan Garland, Mary Heidenreich, Veetta Hopkins, John Joyce, Joyce Lehman, Pearl Ogletree, and Jim Wood.

Cornell colleagues who have been my support and allies include: Don Barr, Mon Cochran, Christiann Dean, Kay Embrey, Herb Engman, and Darlene Ortiz.

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December, 1992

Innovator awards recognize outstanding contributions in research, extension and teaching in the field of community and rural development. These case studies are descriptions of individuals and programs which have received Institute Innovator awards.

Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI), Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801 (607) 255-9510

CULTURAL DIVERSITY
REFERENCES
by
Kathy Castania

Bell, Derrick. 1992. Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism. New York: Harper Collins
An examination of racism - institutional and personal. It is powerfully written in short fictional vingettes.

Berry, Wendell. 1989. The Hidden Wound. San Francisco: North Point Press.
Examination of racism through its link to rural discrimination and prejudice.

Bowser, Benjamin P. and Hunt, Raymond G.1981. The Impacts of Racism on White Americans. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc.
Anthology of research studies, ethnographies and theoretical essays which unveil the ways that White Americans have experienced racism.

Friere, Paulo. 1981. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum.
A timeless analysis of oppression — an understanding of the dynamics of how perceptions are formed by the oppressed as well as the oppressor. The author applies these theories to educational approaches which empower and encourage critical consciousness.

Gilligan, Carol. 1982. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
A rich persuasive account of female moral development and the female life cycle. Using her research and common sense the author reveals the hidden biases that have affected psychological development theories as they apply to women.

Hacker, Andrew. 1992. Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
Current analysis of racism exploring the persistence of racism into the 90's. It reveals how deeply issues of race shape the thinking of all Americans.

Katz, Judy H. 1978. White Awareness: Handbook for White Awareness Training. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.
The beginning of this book is a good introduction to issues of race and their implications for White people. Ms. Katz then devotes the rest of the book to activities and exercises to use in leading workshops.

Kochman,Thomas. 1981. Black and White Styles in Conflict. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
This is an interesting little book which reveals the perceptions and behaviors of African Americans and White people which often lead to conflict. He looks beneath the often confusing behaviors which lead to inaccurate judgements, mistrust and prejudices.

Morrison, Toni. 1987. Beloved. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Pulitzer prize winning novel which is quickly becoming classic in American literature.

Nieto, Sonia. 1992. Affirming Diversity. New York: Longman.
Using ethnographic interviews the author illustrates the institutional barriers to learning and gives a voice to a vision of a higher level multicultural education approaches.

Richard-Amato and Marguerite Ann Snow. 1992. The Multicultural Classroom: Readings for Content Area Teachers. New York: Longman
This anthology examines the needs of language minority students, and illustrates the teaching skills that are needed to work with new immigrant students. The theories in this book can easily be applied to Extension work with language minority adults.

Samovar, Larry A., Richard E. Porter, and Nemi C.Jain.1981. Understanding Intercultural Communication. Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth Publishing Co.
This book is intended for people working and living in intercultural situations — both international and domestic. It deals with the obstacles to trust and understanding between cultures by encouraging increased consciousness of ones' own cultural values and beliefs.

Smith, Lillian. 1949. Killers of the Dream. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
One of the best books for looking at the process of socialization into racism through the personal historical experiences of a white woman in the south.

Stalvey, Lois Mark. 1989. The Education of a WASP. The University of Wisconsin Press.
One White woman's personal journey in discovery of individual and institutional racism practices. It is written in a journal form.

Steinberg, Stephen. 1981. The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America. Boston: Beacon Press.
A very thorough historical examination of the process of "making it" among different ethnic, racial and class groups. It answers the question: "we made it why can't they?"

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. 1992. Assimilation Blues: Black Families in A White Community. HMP Hazel-Maxwell Publishing.
This is a very interesting little book for communities which are predominately White. Through qualitative research it examines the perspectives of African Americans living in these communities.

Thomas, Roosevelt. 1991. Beyond Race and Gender: Unleashing the Power of your Total Work Force by Managing Diversity. New York: AMACOM.
An excellent book on empowering approaches for organizational change.

Multicultural Resources

The following are resources that are available for ongoing information about issues in Multicultural Education:

Facing History and Ourselves News

This newsletter is published two times a year and is free to all interested in the mission of the Foundation. Facing History and Ourselves is a national educational and teacher training organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism , prejudice and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry.

Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc
16 Hurd Road
Brookline, MA 02146
(617)232-1595

Focus on Study Circle: The Newsletter of the Study Circles Resource Center

This is a free quarterly publication. The Resource Center promotes small-group democratic, participatory discussions on social and political issues.

PO Box 203, 697A
Pomfret Rd., CT 06258
(203) 928-2616 FAX: (203)928-3713

Multicultural Education: The Magazine of the National Association for Multicultural Education

This quarterly publication features articles by major scholars and practitioners in the field. It also contains multicultural resources, interviews, and book and film reviews. $40. yearly subscription.

Kansas State University
261 Bluemont Hall
Manhattan, Kansas 66506
(913) 532-7688

The Multicultural Messenger

The voice of cultural diversity for educators, administrators, and school board members.

The Peoples Publishing Group
230 West Passaic Street
Maywood, NJ 07607
1-800-822-1080
Fax: 201-712-0045

Rethinking Schools: An Urban Educational Journal

Rethinking Schools is a non-profit, independent newspaper advocating the reform of elementary and secondary public schools. The emphasis in on urban schools and issues of equity and social justice.

1001 East Keefe Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212
(414)964-9646 FAX (414)964-7220

In addition, this publication by the State Education Department would be good to have as a current resource:

Multiculturalism Bibliography:
Selected Sources from the Collection of the New York State Library
The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Albany, New York 12230